

REVIEWS

Digital War: A View From the Front Lines edited by Robert Bateman III, Presidio Press, Novato, Calif., 1999; \$29.95.

What exactly is digital war, and why is it important to the future of the military? Robert Bateman gathers a distinguished group of military authors and thinkers and tackles one of the most salient issues facing United States military forces in the 21st century in his finely edited and authored book, *Digital War: A View From the Front*.

Digital War is an anthology that is structured simply but carefully. The book is divided into three broad subsections, addressing the impact of the digital revolution at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare. The political aspects of warfare are not specifically addressed, but the purpose of the book is to "stimulate discussion about the course and direction of the military in light of the effects of digitization." Bateman accomplishes this purpose magnificently, with his own opening essay providing a solid introduction to the nuances and possible implications of the ever expanding torrent of digital information available to military leaders.

Many of the nine contributors to *Digital War* are familiar to the military reader: Daniel Bolger, John Antal, and Douglas MacGregor, to name but three. Each addresses a particular aspect of digitization. Antal will raise some eyebrows with his essay "The End of Maneuver," but his essay "Battleshock XXI" is the most entertaining and paints a grim tactical picture of a future Army force that is over-reliant on technology and short on firepower. MacGregor clearly and cogently addresses command and control issues for the future while Bolger examines the prospects for the light fighter on the digital battlefield. Bateman ties the essays together with his conclusion, which includes a brief discussion of the aspects of a military revolution.

Digital War does exactly what its editor advertises. It is a great introduction to the thorny issues of digitization facing the Army and the rest of the military, and it will serve as a springboard for future discussion. As the commander of an M1A2 tank battalion, digitization makes an impact every time I climb into the turret. My tank is logged on; I have your icon on my IVIS screen. Are you logged on?

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A Frozen Hell: The Russo-Finnish War of 1939-1940 by William R. Trotter, Algonquin Books, Chapel Hill, N.C., 2000; 304 pages; \$15.95, paper; ISBN 1-56512-249-6.

If it is true that "climate is what you expect, but weather is what you get," then the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-1940 is quite literally the most chilling example of winter warfare in the 20th century. Here was a modern war in the arctic and subarctic winter

where the importance of geography and weather cannot ever be understated.

A Frozen Hell is the apt title of this re-release of William Trotter's award-winning history of the one-sided 100-day war between the mighty totalitarian Soviet Union and the tiny, parliamentary democracy of Finland. Originally published as a hardcover in 1991, this astonishing story is now reprinted in a classy, well-presented paperback. Trotter is a historian and feature writer who has produced 12 books and numerous articles, but this book is by far his most important contribution to our understanding of military history and men at war in the most harsh conditions imaginable. It is no surprise that for several years this book has been required reading in the 2nd Marine Division, the USMC's specialist unit for arctic warfare.

Few books have been written about the Winter War, and the only other English language book of any substance on this subject is *The White Death* by Allen F. Chew (Michigan State University Press, 1971). Trotter's study is a dramatic and gripping blend of blunt Russian "realpolitik" and the gritty reality of warfare in the dark, trackless forests of frozen Finland, with men killing each other in temperatures 30 degrees below zero.

Finland is a Scandinavian country "whose terrain consists of practically nothing but natural obstacles to military operations," not to mention a rather inhospitable climate in which to wage war. As Trotter relates, in 1939 Stalin was fearful of his tiny, weak neighbor, suspicious of a possible Finnish-German alliance during that period of the Phony War in Europe. Stalin's paranoia concluded that Finland could not be allowed to remain neutral. After absurd posturing, threats, and ridiculous demands, the Russians attacked Finland on November 30, 1939. A quick and easy victory, the political commissars promised Stalin.

The Finns, however, were not intimidated. Although desperately outnumbered, outgunned, and poorly equipped, with no tanks, few planes, and obsolete artillery dating back to 1871, the Finns had no shortage of courage, resourcefulness, and resolute leadership. And for 100 days they fought the Soviet war machine to a bloody standstill, inflicting more than half a million casualties on the Red Army. Of course, Finland eventually lost the war, overwhelmed by men and material, but amazingly, of all the Baltic states that negotiated with Stalin in 1939, only Finland resisted Soviet aggression and only Finland survived as a free and independent nation.

With vivid and haunting descriptions, Trotter tells how the Finns made maximum use of their geography and weather in combination with tactical adjustments and small-unit leadership to repeatedly foil and defeat huge Soviet armor and infantry formations. Speed, camouflage, deception, economy of force, quick concentration and rapid dispersal, audacity, and surprise were the cornerstones of Finnish military planning.

Trotter tells of large and small scale raids, ambushes, long-range patrols, junior officer

and NCO leadership, and the savagery of close-quarters combat in deep snow, at night, in subzero temperatures. The importance of bold commanders armed with guts, imagination, and determination is stressed continuously. In just one example, a Finnish infantry company killed 1,000 Russian soldiers and destroyed 16 enemy tanks in one engagement, without any antitank guns, and no friendly artillery or air support.

Finland finally surrendered in March 1940, but not until it had dealt the Russians "a major military debacle whose diplomatic and material damage would prove costly to repair." Stalin was shaken, and Finland retained its sovereignty. Trotter's superb research and riveting narrative tell a tale of epic resistance to naked aggression, with all the military and diplomatic lessons clear to see and as timely today as they were 60 years ago. This book should be essential reading for every military professional.

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Eighth Army's Greatest Victories: Alam Halfa to Tunis 1942-1943 by Adrian Stewart, Leo Cooper, Barnsley: United Kingdom, 1999; 224 pp., hardback.

Source: Penn & Sword Book Ltd., Freepost SF5, 47 Church St., Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2BR or www.yorkshire-web.co.uk/ps/

Adrian Stewart's little book is quite surprising. At first glance it has hard to see how there can be anything new to tell in the story of Eighth Army. Although Stewart attempts no new scholarship, he does add two useful pieces to the body of history of the North African campaigns. First, he takes the history of Eighth Army as a whole, and not as two discrete parts, one coming before El Alamein and one after. Secondly, he examines critically Montgomery's role in reorganizing the Eighth Army, planning and executing its successful effort to rid Egypt and Libya of Rommel. The result is a very readable and complete narrative of the Eighth Army's ups and downs and the special imprint that Montgomery had on this heterogeneous colonial and allied force.

Beyond knowing that first, the Italians raced east, and then were chased west, and then Rommel came, most Americans know little and probably care less what went on in North Africa prior to Torch. The campaigns in North Africa deserve more but were overshadowed by larger if not more important operations elsewhere. The Russian victory at Stalingrad and the Russian offensives of the spring and summer of 1942 have tended to overshadow the war in the desert. In the spring of 1942, the Americans still held a toehold in Asia, not surrendering Corregidor until May, and, in June, the United States Navy stopped Yamamoto cold at Midway, sinking four of his carriers. In the summer of 1942, Eighth Army, led by Montgomery, first stopped Rommel at Alam Halfa and then thoroughly defeated him at El Alamein in October-November 1942.

From that point on, Montgomery and Eighth Army had the upper hand.

The forces that both sides commanded in the desert were never very large. Rommel began his last major offensive in January 1942 with 160 tanks. In June, he crossed into Egypt, having taken Tobruk, with 55 German tanks, 30 Italian tanks, and 4,500 German and Italian infantry. The Allies always outnumbered their opponents, but their numbers were not large either. In August of 1942, just before Alam Halfa, the British fielded 772 tanks, of which 693 were serviceable. Rommel, having received some reinforcement, could field 232 German tanks and another 281 Italian tanks. Rommel enjoyed a slight edge in the comparison of the two desert air forces, with 720 aircraft vice 565 aircraft of all types in support of Eighth Army. Rommel's total troop strength was under 100,000 while Eighth Army's approached 150,000.

What mattered most was the quality of weapons and the quality of leadership. Rommel and the German tanks were generally superior to their British counterparts. With the arrival of Montgomery and the Sherman tanks, the balance shifted toward the British. Until Montgomery's arrival, Eighth Army had not beaten Rommel and had broken their tank strength time and again on Rommel's 88s. The British had one eye on Rommel and one eye on the way back toward Alexandria. Montgomery changed all of that. Montgomery understood how to handle both British and Colonial troops. More importantly, he had a clear vision of what had to be done. First, he reorganized the Army from a brigade model to a divisional model. Though the brigade model was tempting because it fostered maneuver, it effectively assured that armor and artillery would not mass. Montgomery looked to his divisions to integrate combined arms and mass the fires of his tanks and artillery. Montgomery also eschewed preparations to retreat toward the Nile, electing instead to erect a defense between the Qatara Depression and the Mediterranean against which he expected Rommel to break.

Montgomery's scheme included interlocking defenses and thoroughly rehearsed local attacks. No longer would Rommel be offered a war of maneuver against fragmented armor and infantry brigades. Montgomery also worked hard to assure that all of his Army understood his intent and were trained and ready for the moment. Rommel duly attacked at Alam Halfa in August to find that Montgomery's new system worked. Determined to hold on, Rommel assumed the defensive. In October and November, Eighth Army attacked, employing massed fires and coordinated efforts by large formations of tanks against Rommel's thinned-out but still formidable defenses, reinforced by a half million mines. With the operation planned in detail, the thoroughly rehearsed Eighth Army broke through.

Eighth Army's pursuit failed to catch Rommel in the open, and though he lost thousands of his infantry, the heart of his army — his tanks and mobile forces — escaped to prolong the campaign until 1943. Stewart notes that though personal supervision had character-

ized the early months of Montgomery's leadership of Eighth Army, he did not closely control the pursuit. Stewart believes he did not because he believed a decentralized effort was the best way to pursue. Stewart argues here that Montgomery failed in this, and his assessment is compelling.

Stewart reveals the long trials and tribulations of Eighth Army and the power of Montgomery to turn a sullen and poorly led Army into one of high morale capable of defeating the legendary Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps. Montgomery was brilliant in the desert and Stewart's little book explains why. Montgomery's example is useful for contemporary soldiers reminding us of the need to know ourselves, our weapons, and our soldiers. With that knowledge, we can prepare ourselves properly and succeed against the very best opponents.

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Ortona, Canada's Epic World War II Battle by Mark Zeuhlke, Stoddart Publishing Co., 1999; 320 pages plus 16 pages of photographs, 4 maps, 2 indices, a glossary and 5 appendices; \$22.95.

By December 1943, the Allies were stopped at the German Bernhard/Gustav Line in Italy with the U.S. 5th Army in the west and the British 8th Army in the east. The Allied plan called for the 8th Army to attack to force the Germans to shift forces away from the 5th Army, allowing it to break through the Gustav Line at Cassino, link up with the planned amphibious invasion at Anzio, and then capture Rome. The British plan was to attack with three divisions up. While they were initially successful, momentum was soon lost in the face of strong counterattacks by the German forces. At Moro River, three miles south of Ortona, the Germans entrenched. The 8th Army ordered the 1st Canadian Division to conduct a relief in place with the 78th Division and then capture Ortona. This was to be the first major battle fought entirely by an all-Canadian force: the 1st Canadian Division supported by the 1st Canadian Armour Brigade.

The battle of Ortona took a month and was really three distinct fights: the crossing of the Moro River, a fight for The Gully and then the street fighting to take Ortona. The author tells his story starting with the relief in place and then covers each of the fights in detail. The narrative is written in a style that keeps your interest while still detailing the action from brigade to platoon. While most of it deals with how the Canadians fought, Mr. Zeuhlke also mixes in stories about the German forces and the Italian civilians which helps to make it readable.

The author describes an interesting difference in the operational concept of the two German divisions facing the Canadians. The 90th Panzer Grenadier Division defended in the first stages of the battle and their concept

involved a strong defensive coupled with repeated counterattacks whenever they lost a position. While successful, it cost them a large number of casualties. The 1st Parachute Division, which fought the later fights, used strong defenses coupled with a lot of demolitions. Rather than counterattacking, they infiltrated small groups behind the Canadians to harass after they lost a position.

The battle was essentially an infantry fight because of the very wet weather and the close country (river valleys and ridges and vineyards full of farming obstacles). The fight for Ortona was unusual in itself. Usually the Germans would withdraw from towns and villages after the Allies had bypassed them. In this case, politics seems to have made the Germans stay and defend. They defended well and it became a classic MOUT battle. The Sherman tanks of 1st Canadian Armour Brigade were used throughout. It is especially interesting to read of the tactics the tanks used, both in the close country and in Ortona itself, which may well give us modern tankers some lessons that can be used in today's MOUT situations.

The author specializes in Canadian military history and this is his ninth book. The last chapter of the book describes the ground today, based on his walking the battlefield accompanied by an acquaintance of mine who is a serving Canadian armour officer and whose interest and knowledge of military history I personally respect. His involvement helped persuade me that the facts relating to ground and tactics were accurately covered.

Bottom line: a very readable and interesting book which is relevant today as we look at using armor in MOUT situations and in places like Bosnia and Kosovo where the country is constricted.

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Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point by Stephen E. Ambrose, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999; 377 pages; \$16.95.

This is the best general history of the United States Military Academy ever written. Originally published in 1966, Ambrose's work has been updated to the present day by LTG (Ret.) Andrew Goodpaster, who has written an extended afterword. The volume recounts the founding and evolution of the Academy, from the Revolutionary era debates over its establishment to the end of the last century.

Beginning with a short summary of the American military experience in the 18th century, Ambrose discusses the birth of the Academy at West Point and the acrimonious debate which surrounded it, a debate which has persisted, in one form or another, throughout its history. He then takes the reader through the rough early years, the crystallization of the West Point ideal under Sylvanus Thayer, and the making of West Point's reputation during the Mexican and Civil Wars. Following the

doldrums of the late 19th century, Ambrose describes how Douglas MacArthur brought the Academy, kicking and screaming, into the 20th century after the First World War. He then traces the further evolution of West Point into something more akin to a modern university, a story extended from the mid-'60s by Goodpaster, a former Superintendent who served during the turbulent integration of women into the Corps of Cadets.

The narrative focuses on the internal changes at the Academy, particularly the growth of the curriculum, while fixing them firmly within the ever-evolving role West Point played in American military culture. From a narrow focus on producing engineers for a young nation desperate for them, USMA's mission expanded to training the future leaders of an Army. For many years, West Point provided the only institutional schooling in tactics, military history, or strategy that an officer might receive during his entire career. The rise of staff and branch schools freed West Point to devote more time to the education of future officers in politics, economics, and other arts needed in an Army with a worldwide reach and concomitant responsibilities.

Not to say that these transitions were smooth. Ambrose points out that agreement on the place of West Point in the Army or society has never been reached (a conclusion supported by the constant fiddling with the USMA mission statement over the last decade or so). Moreover, even when the need for change was patently obvious to everyone else, West Point as an institution has proven to be extremely resistant to new ideas. To Ambrose, the West Point story has been one of success breeding complacency, punctured by sharp shocks. These shocks had to be administered by men with the vision to comprehend the need for change, and the arrogance to carry it through the opposition of hidebound professors and disgruntled old grads. In the 19th century, Sylvanus Thayer fulfilled this role, and is quite properly recognized as the father of the Academy. Less well known is the revolution wrought by Douglas MacArthur in the 1920s, which launched West Point along a path of modernization from which it has not yet deviated.

Ambrose also relates the inner life of the Academy, and thereby captures the essential paradox of West Point: it is an institution that has reformed itself violently over the centuries, while maintaining a sense of timelessness about its daily rhythms and customs. Certainly the complaints of 19th century cadets that there was little to do, that they learned many things they saw no value in, and that life as a cadet did not prepare them for life after graduation, would be echoed by their modern counterparts.

In summary, this is an essential read for anyone wishing to understand West Point — it should be mandatory reading for all cadets. I only wish that Ambrose could find the time to update the volume himself; the integration of women is an issue I would love to see him sink his analytical teeth into. Goodpaster's afterword is workmanlike but uninspired, and he is certainly far from a disinterested ob-

server. If Ambrose did bring this book up to date, perhaps he could help us to identify who will be the 21st century's MacArthur.

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"Tank Battles" Series Books; Tanks In Chechnya: Soviet Armored Technology in the Hot Spots of the USSR and the CIS 1989-1998 by M. Baryatinskiy; "Zheleznodorozhnoye Delo" (Railway Affairs) Publishing, 1999; 72 pp. (ISBN 5-93574-001-X); price \$14 plus \$3.50 shipping and handling from Eastern Front Hobbies, P.O. Box 758, Madison, AL 35758.

Advantages: Clear, clean photos of modern Soviet combat systems in action, taken from many combat areas not familiar outside of the former Soviet Union, dual Russian-English text throughout.

Disadvantages: New publisher, small circulation on first press run (1,000 copies).

Rating: Highly recommended to anyone interested in "local wars and regional conflicts" and Soviet armored equipment.

This is a very handy book to many of us who follow Soviet and post-Soviet armored vehicles. It provides material from the personal collections of Mr. Baryatinskiy, Russian press agencies, and Aleksandr Kovshchatsev, which covers the post-Soviet era of combat within the borders of the former Soviet Union.

Photos cover action in Georgia (1989 onward), Armenia and Azerbaijan (1990 onward), Nagorno-Karabakh (1990 onward), South Ossetia (1991 onward), Vilnius 1991, the Moscow Revolt of 1991, Tadzhikistan (1992 onward), North Ossetia (1992 onward), the birth of the Transdnestr Republic (1992), Abkhazia (1992 onward), the Storming of the White House (1993), Chechnya (1994 onward), and some memorial vehicles in Maykop, North Caucasus Military District, 1999. There are over 120 good clear shots of this equipment, including vehicles such as the T-72BM and BMP-3 in action.

The book was sponsored by the Moscow City Chapter of the All-Russia Society for Preservation of Memorials and Culture, which is described as a military history club. Units in action, as well as knocked-out and totally destroyed equipment, is presented. To the slight dismay of modelers, no color information is provided, nor are any color photos included.

This book is highly recommended to all modern armor fans who need to understand the real problems faced by the former republics of the Soviet Union, or who need to get a solid feeling for what the systems really look like in action. Mr. Baryatinskiy's photo collection and text explain things very concisely.

COOKIE SEWELL
AMPS

Special Forces: the Men, the Weapons, and the Operations by David Miller, Salamander Books Limited, London, UK, 1999, 176 pp. Foreword, photos, diagrams, and index, (hardbound); \$29.95; ISBN: 1-840-65021-4.

According to the jacket overleaf, Mr. David Miller was a former British Army officer who served in the Far East, Central Europe, and the Falkland Islands in his career. After leaving the service, he went to work for Jane's Information Group, where he was on staff for *Jane's International Defence Review* and produced the first edition of *Jane's Major Surface Warships*. He then returned to the life of a freelance writer and contributed articles to many military journals, as well as writing some 35 books. Despite these impressive credentials, however, a number of errors in reporting have crept into his most recent work.

The book itself is a big, coffee-table-sized edition with lots of color pictures. The typeface is small, but readable. The book's content is divided into three main sections: an overview of 31 nations' special forces units, an examination of several operations, and a chapter on the specifications of weapons and equipment used by such units. There is also a foreword, introduction, and an index.

In the opening foreword by General (Ret.) Robert C. Kingston, the tone of the book appears to be more concerned with presenting an aura of elitism in the proverbial "war story" format, than a serious study of the training, methods of operation and employment, and, ultimately, the effectiveness of special operations units. For example, the following quotation from the foreword is offered as illustration: "Some organizations, when not selecting certain individuals within their ranks (for whatever reason) return them to their parent unit, or to another organization, usually a *support type...*" (Emphasis added). This seems to perpetuate the same ideas expressed in the condescending phrase "soft-skilled MOS," used to generally mean anyone not from an infantry or Ranger unit in the U.S. Army.

I had problems with the introduction because Mr. Miller failed to adequately define his terminology. He used elite force, special force, and counter-terrorist force almost interchangeably, and without regard to any subtleties in definition. Once again, the perception of elitism crept into the wording of his explanations. In point of fact, any military, police, or counter-terrorist organization can be viewed as elite if the organization is good at what it does and it recruits and trains quality people to fill its ranks. A far more useful approach would have been to look at these paramilitary/unconventional organizations in terms of their missions, rather than using some form of nebulous subjective assessment of 'elitism.' For example, conventional maneuver forces at platoon, company, battalion, and brigade levels perform tactical tasks on the battlefield such as destroy, disrupt, deny, seize, secure, defeat, etc., that reference the enemy, terrain, or friendly forces for their accomplishment. Unconventional forces, however, usually operate in elements significantly smaller than a

conventional battalion or even a large company, and are not equipped or supported with the same levels of firepower and vehicles. They do not, therefore, fit into the conventional force employment paradigm, except, perhaps as reconnaissance assets, or target designators for deep-strike platforms. Their missions, therefore, are unconventional by that definition. And, in fact, the U.S. defines four broad missions for the employment of non-conventional forces: unconventional warfare, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, and direct action.

There were a number of errors in his description of the U.S. Special Forces, of which I will highlight a few. On page 59, he writes, "With the increasing emphasis of recent years that has been placed on special forces, this decline (in training standards following the Vietnam War) is in the process of being reversed and training attrition rates — now in the 60 percent plus range — are about what would be anticipated for a special force." This is a curiously immature outlook on the purpose of selection and training. Any military school can achieve a high attrition rate by simply placing enormous physical burdens on its attendees. The challenge is to ensure that the process that selects and trains the members of the organization is achieving the desired outcome — regardless of the pass-fail rate.

Again, on the same page, he writes that one of the six missions for which Special Forces are trained is coalition warfare. This is ludicrous. Coalition warfare is carried out under national command authority directive and involves joint and combined operations on a theater scale.

There is also a strangely captioned photograph on page 64 that states, "...This huge ladder (obstacle) is at the Ranger's base at Fort Bragg." There are no Ranger battalions at Fort Bragg, and the ladder obstacle is part of a small obstacle course frequently used by Air Assault School MTTs, although units do use it for physical training.

Finally, he often refers to the M-16A2 as the "famous Armalite" and the M4 as the "Colt Commando." Neither name is used in the U.S. Army. However, the pictures and diagrams of the weapons and equipment are well done and make for an easy reference for some of the characteristics of the weapons.

Unfortunately, the descriptions of a selection of various Special Forces' operations around the world suffer from a lack of incisive conclusions or new revelations. The account of the "Achille Lauro Incident" ends with, "What really counted was that terrorists who took the law into their own hands for whatever motive were ultimately brought to justice."

While this book provides an introduction of sorts and a broad swath of information on Special Forces and unconventional units around the world, it is not the definitive resource on the subject.

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SOFTWARE

Imperialism II by Mindscape, \$34.96 from the Strategic Simulations Inc. website, www.ssionline.com, or local software retailer.

Requires Windows 95/98, Pentium 133 or higher, 4x CD ROM, 16 MB RAM minimum, Microsoft-compatible mouse, 16-bit high color SVGA graphics and any Windows-compatible sound card.

Reviewed on IBM PC 133 Pentium with Windows 98 and 56 MB RAM.

Strategic Simulations Incorporated has released the second game in its age of exploration games. *Imperialism II* simulates nation building from the 1500s to the 1900s in Europe. Not only does a player explore the New World to gain power, but he must also dominate the political landscape in Europe. The game has tutorials and campaigns that range from historical maps and forces to hypothetical maps and forces.

The game casts the player as a leader in Europe during the 1500s. *Imperialism II*'s main goal is to become the most powerful country in Europe. You can do this through conquest, diplomacy, or a combination of both. Using your nation's resources, such as production and labor, you struggle to dominate Europe through the end of the 1900s. The game has single and multiple player, modem and linked scenarios, and campaigns. Each scenario or campaign allows the player to choose from a historical setting that includes map, leaders, and resources or a random setting in each of the categories. With three hundred years to choose from, playability will not become an issue. The game also includes a rulebook and gloss map and resource information card for quick reference. The card contains a hot key reference as well. The rulebook follows a typical setup explaining units, resources, and a description of play.

The game uses a turn-based sequence. With each turn, the player receives notification of new information in numerous areas, ranging from industrial production to political intrigue. The player can perform many functions during each turn, from increasing his labor pool, raising new units for his army or navy, and creating new civilian units, such as explorers or spies. The player can also perform diplomatic functions, ranging from opening a new embassy, to trade negotiations, to declarations of war. To move a unit, the game uses a point and click interface that allows for quick turn resolution. Explorers discover new lands and resources. Carpenters and laborers develop land and products. Advisors calculate resources. Politicians provide advice on how to deal with neighboring countries and allies. With this turn system, a player can easily complete a number of years in 30 minutes. The player can determine how much of the administrative burden he will control by using a tool menu. This menu allows the player to delegate administrative functions, such as research and development, to government ministers. These settings can be changed

anytime the player likes with no penalty, allowing for a leader to change any part of his nation's growth based on game events. The game has over forty types of units with laborers, explorers, frigates, knights, and spies, to list a few. It also has over one hundred technologies that can be developed, twenty terrain types, and a Windows-based interface that most potential players will recognize. The game provides a lot of action, as a single turn can see declarations of war, new technologies and races discovered, and random events, such as plagues. The game is aesthetically pleasing with battlefield sights and sounds, official proclamations, and baroque type screens and stylish background music.

The game's primary strengths stem from the well-designed rule book, ease of play format, and overall appearance. The tutorial allows players to immediately install the game and play within minutes. It requires a player to successfully execute each function, from researching new technologies to building new units to exploring and developing new territories. Each tutorial also carries over into the next, so a player can practice each function repetitively. The tutorial covers fifty years if a player performs all of the functions successfully. The Windows-based game system allows players to learn the game format itself quickly. It also allows players to customize game features, even during play. Finally, the graphics and sound effects just make an enjoyable gaming experience.

On the negative side, I just cannot find the right mix of diplomacy, industrial management and exploration to win. I have managed a country through a century, but never really gotten out of the middle of the pack. At some point in each of the games I have played, my nation ends up declining rapidly in all areas and becoming conquered by a stronger power. The game has numerous websites, which provide tips on play. Of course, this is not a negative aspect, but play balance seems to present a considerable challenge. Even with the AI turned down, I still cannot break into Great Power status. The nuances of this game cannot be stressed enough. The game seamlessly integrates all the aspects of nation-building. The replay value of the game is limitless. I really enjoyed the game and found that losing can still provide some enjoyment. The game plays cleanly and quickly, so there are really no complaints from this reviewer.

This game does an excellent job in providing the user with a detailed simulation of nation building in Europe from 1500 to 1900. The game challenges a player to build his nation and allies, destroy his enemies and develop his country in all facets of civilization to win. With great graphics, an easy Windows interface and endless replay value, I recommend Mindscape's *Imperialism II* as a repeated play game to enjoy again and again. The interaction of diplomacy, politics, industrial development and exploration require a player to be more than an armchair general.

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